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EXHIBIT NO. 2
DATE 4-2-2009
BILL NO. HB 548

April 2, 2009

Re: HB 548 – Regulation of facilities which breed and/or sell dogs.

The legislation that is currently before this committee is a good first step toward holding people accountable for ensuring that not only animals in their care are treated humanely, but also that the animals they are providing for the public are healthy, and in good temperament.

As an instructor on dog behavior and handling, I have worked on the worst of cases, many have included dogs that have already bitten people or are exhibiting severe aggression. Often times these negative behaviors are a result of improper training or human ignorance on canine behavior. Thankfully these cases are correctable. Sadly though, there are other cases where the dog's negative behavior is not a result of a lack of training, or bad training for that matter. It is instead a result of bad breeding.

Responsible breeders consider the physical characteristics of the puppies they are breeding, as well as the mental temperament of the puppies. Selective breeding is what will create mentally healthy puppies. These breeders care for their dogs. If there is a problem with one of their pups, no matter how many years after the sale, they will take the dog back, and it is because they care.

There are then the puppy mills. These are people who are in the business of breeding for one purpose only: to make money. They do not care where the dogs go or who they go to. They find mating pairs that might result in physically appealing looking dogs, but in essence could have physical problems, and typically behavioral problems. This results in the public beginning to lose confidence in dogs that are produced by these puppy mills, whose primary customers are pet stores.

It is these people who ultimately are the cause of these problems yet are rarely held responsible. With respect to breeding caused behavioral problems, the ones that pay the price are usually the victims, as well as the dogs themselves. When in reality it is the breeders that are to blame for irresponsibly breeding dogs of poor temperament which result in unstable dogs.

These dogs are not only a burden on those that buy them, but often become a burden on shelters, rescues and many times, the states that the breeders operate in. In Montana alone, over the past

few years there have been several cases of puppy mills being closed down, resulting in costs of over \$2 million. This step towards preventing such unnecessary costs is one that is logical and also ethically justified.

This legislation is needed state wide as counties and cities are not able to address the problem of puppy mills themselves. It is also needed to restore public confidence, that the animals they are getting are ones of quality and are products of caring and responsible breeders and providers of dogs. By leveling the playing field for all canine providers that sell more than 100 dogs per year, a fair and balanced minimum of standards are established. These standards will allow for early intervention and bring compliance to the few puppy providers that might otherwise be potential financial and resource liabilities to local communities.

HB 548 is a proactive preventive bill that can get the state and counties working together to ensure that huge cases costing Montana communities can be dealt with before they become an issue. While only addressing the largest of puppy providing business and facilities, HB 548 will still allow the agricultural community and the state board of veterinary medicine to play an active roll in ensuring a healthy, disease free puppy population within Montana.

Ultimately this bill is a step towards the practice of holding people accountable for their actions. It ensures the well-being of the produced dogs, and also helps to reestablish public confidence.

Thank you for your time. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact me at:
406.580.3329 or mtwdog108@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Troy Kechely
Think Dog Consulting